DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 401 774 HE 029 607

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TITLE The Faculty Forum: A Case Study in Shared Authority.
PUB DATE [96]
NOTE 21p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Agency Role; Case Studies; *College Faculty; *College Governing Councils; *Faculty College Relationship; *Governance; Group Dynamics; Higher Education; *Participative Decision Making; *Power Structure; Program Descriptions; Program Effectiveness; Schools of Education; Teacher Attitudes; Teacher Participation; Universities
IDENTIFIERS *University of Alabama

ABSTRACT

The faculty governance body in the College of Education at the University of Alabama is described. Analysis of archives resulted in the identification of four areas of authority in which faculty shared: participation in meetings, agendas, voting behavior, and issues considered by the body. Data revealed that generally half of all faculty, regardless of rank or tenure status, participated in the formal governance activity, and that the majority of issues voted on focused on organization self-perpetuation. Several measures that are particularly sensitive in the current higher education climate were introduced in this arena. Emphasis was placed on dissemination of important information to faculty. The conclusion is drawn that the governance body provides a valuable forum for faculty to speak and be heard by administrators throughout the college. (Author/MSE)

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ED 401 774

The Faculty Forum: A Case Study in Shared Authority

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Abstract

The current case study was developed to profile and describe a faculty governance body in a comprehensive College of Education at a Doctoral Granting University. The faculty was observed through archive analysis to explore and describe five areas of shared authority: participation, agendas, voting behavior, and issues considered. Analysis of the data indicated that generally half of all faculty, regardless of rank or tenure, participated in the formal governance activity, and that the majority of issues voted on focused on organization self-perpetuation. The conclusion was drawn that the Forum does provide a valuable conduit for allowing faculty voices to be spoken and heard by administrators throughout the College.

Participatory governance has held a long history in higher education, often as a matter of necessity and survival. The earliest Colonial Colleges relied on faculty to provide all of the administrative tasks of the institution, ranging from teaching and recruiting students to fund raising and managing housing facilities. The contemporary university has turned full-circle in its reliance on faculty, denying faculty participatory roles during an era of departmentalization, to now working hard to involve faculty in virtually every aspect of the institution.

The contemporary college faculty member plays a number of different roles on campus, including that of teacher and scholar, and despite legal decisions (Miles, Anderson, & Miller, 1996), continues to play at least some role in institutional decision-making. Gilmour (1991) argued that nearly all colleges and universities involve faculty in some form of governance, or co-governance (Birnbaum, 1991), but that this role has become something closer to advisory in nature (Gilmour, 1991). Schuster (1991) did contend that faculty input is vital to higher education, and that most faculty senates or councils are effective in demonstrating faculty beliefs.

Amid changes in the decision-making process for higher education, including those of changing state and local reporting channels and responsibilities to governing boards, faculty are increasingly involved in institutional governance. Although faculty have in recent history identified themselves primarily with academic decisions, as a collective body they are involved

increasingly in academic support areas, such as student affairs. This participation has been viewed from the standpoint of impact on teaching (Miller, Garavalia, & McCormack, 1996), ideal governance structures (Miller, McCormack, & Newman, 1995; Gilmour, 1991), barriers to involvement (Glenny, 1985), and in comparisons between institutional typologies (Miller, McCormack, & Newman, 1996).

The current study was designed to explore and describe the practices of a faculty governing body at one particular academic unit over the course of an academic year. At the macro-level, the current analysis has implications for the concept of shared authority and how effectively separate bodies working together can provide governance to an institution. At the micro-level, the analysis has implications for individual colleges and departments which typically serve as the primary conduits for involving faculty in decision-making. The discussion also serves as an prototype for further analyses in collaboration and sharing authority and power in the governance process, with themes of faculty motivation for involvement and barriers to involvement present in the description.

Trends in Shared Authority

Faculty involvement in the governance of higher education has come to be viewed as a necessity for college administrators. Driven partially by the need to accomplish more diverse goals with non-growth revenue sources and public calls for more

accountability for tuition dollars, faculty have taken a place in the governance activities of most colleges and universities (Gilmour, 1991). The growth of Total Quality Management and Continuous Quality Improvement strategies in private industry during the late-1980s has also forced some attention to the idea of involving various campus groups in governance activities. The concept of participatory management has a strong historical foundation, but the early-1970s demonstrated the power or influence various groups can have over institutional decision-making.

Kerr (1991) wrote that higher education administration has become a career, and as a result, administrative behavior has gone from being faculty-focused to institutionally-focused. The institution, in a sense, has matured to self-serving and preservation motives. The administrative rise and professionalization of administrative ranks provided the impetus for Bergmann (1991) to refer to higher education as consisting of "bloated administration and blighted campuses" (p. 12).

These charges come at the same time as the rise in attention to group development for the sake of institutional effectiveness. Whether referred to as teams (Barwick, 1989) or senates or councils (Gilmour, 1991), the concept has generally been rooted in the idea of "servant leadership." This conceptualization of leadership holds that leaders are actually servants of the workers, empowering them through goal definition, inspiration, rewarding good work, and emphasizing personal development (Lee &

Zemke, 1993). Perhaps one of the greatest barriers to this, however, is the issue of trust and distrust between faculty and administrators (Miller & Seagren, 1993; McCormack, 1995). Changing criteria for merit pay, tenure, or promotion, for example, may meet with resistance by faculty who view their roles in a more traditional manner, while simultaneously, administrators view faculty as residing in the often claimed ivory tower and unwilling to change.

The concept of institutional change has also given way to difficulties in sharing authority. Many institutions have chosen to vigorously pursue research status, while others have jettisoned the concept in favor of a reputation in teaching excellence (Lovett, 1993). Changing institutional priorities, while difficult to translate to faculty workload, provide even further the demonstrated need for a cohesive institution which demonstrates a commonality of purpose and mission to its various constituents.

The Faculty Forum

The Faculty Forum was designed in 1993 to facilitate the involvement of faculty in the College of Education at The University of Alabama. The Forum was designed primarily around the concepts of larger academic faculty senates, including a slate of officers and seven committees, referred to as Action Teams, to handle specific items of business and to conduct further research and study on specific issues of concern. Action

Teams were designed around topical rather than functional areas, and included: Finances and Facilities, Curriculum, External Services and Technology, Faculty Affairs, Governance and Operations, Research, and Student Affairs.

Although The University of Alabama was classified as a Carnegie Doctoral Granting Institution, recent movements had been made in the faculty reward and tenure structure to reclassify the institution as a Research University. These movements largely dealt with rewarding grant writing and increasing the expectation of publications to earn tenure and receive continuous appointment as a Graduate Faculty Member.

By design, the first three Thursday afternoons of the work week were reserved for Forum activities. The first Thursday of each month was reserved for Action Team meetings, the second Thursday of each month was reserved for the Faculty Forum Council Meeting which served as a board of directors, and the third Thursday of each month was reserved for the Faculty Forum all-faculty meeting. Additional meetings, such as those with the Dean of the College, the central office of facilities, etc., were scheduled on an as-needed basis. The current study was concerned only with the all-faculty meetings.

The College of Education was divided into two broad areas rather than departments. Each area included programs, typically with individual program chairs coordinating each activity. These program chairs had individually arranged work assignments, often

receiving one-quarter release time from teaching and research to serve as a program chair.

The areas, Teacher Education and Professional Studies, were coordinated by Area Heads, who were considered faculty rather than administrators, being given half-time release for administrative duties. Teacher Education contained seven individual academic programs all related to teacher certification opportunities, although several degree options included non-teaching certification programs. The Professional Studies area contained six individual academic programs, primarily including graduate programs and several undergraduate programs which had teaching and non-teaching certification opportunities.

The College had an undergraduate enrollment of approximately 1,700 students and 700 graduate students. Both of these enrollment figures reflected increases over the past decade, rising from 1,067 undergraduates in 1985 and 572 graduate students during that same year. Faculty in the college had declined from 90 tenure-earning positions in the 1991 academic year to 77 tenure-earning positions in the 1995 academic year.

An additional item of note was the change in college leadership. A new dean was hired from another institution during the summer prior to the year of study. The new dean was appointed with tenure in Professional Studies, and during the course of the year of study several personnel changes in the college's administration were made.

1995-1996: What Happened

Attendance Patterns

For the entire college, Full-Professors (n=37) attended meetings 43% of the time, Associate Professors (n=7) attended meetings 65% of the time, and Assistant Professors (n=27) attended meetings 53% of the time (see Table 1 and Figure 1). Of the faculty in Teacher Education, Full-Professors (n=20) attended meetings 48% of the time, Associate Professors (n=6) attended 62% of the meetings, and Assistant Professors (n=15) attended 51% of the meetings. In Professional Studies, Full Professors (n=17) attended 37% of the meetings, the Associate Professor (n=1) attended 87% of the meetings, and Assistant Professors (n=12) attended 55% of the meetings.

Faculty holding administrative positions in the Dean's office, all classified as Full-Professors, attended 31% of the meetings.

Agendas

Agendas for each meeting were scheduled to be distributed on the Monday preceding each Faculty Forum meeting (see Figure 2 for sample agenda). Items for the agenda were approved by the chairs of each Action Team along with four elected Forum "directors," all of whom comprised the Faculty Council. The Council met once per month to address issues to be included on the Forum agenda as well as to examine motions and refer new business to appropriate Action Teams.

Agendas typically varied in content from meeting to meeting, but generally followed a similar pattern, including Action Team reports, reports from other faculty representatives to College and University committees, and included motions for faculty vote under new business. Issues related to institutional research necessary for motion advancement were considered at the Action Team level, and were included to Forum members via a standardized format for making motions.

Decisions

A total of 39 motions were presented for action to the Faculty Forum during the 1995-1996 academic year. Of these motions, 36 (92%) were passed, 3 failed, and 1 was tabled with no further action. The majority of the motions were made by untenured faculty (n=26; 66%), as compared to tenured faculty (n=13; 33%), and 69% of all motions passed were made by untenured faculty. Conversely, two of the three motions which failed were made by tenured faculty. The motions included in the analysis excluded all those relating to the approval of meeting minutes and for adjournment.

Of the motions passed, 55% (n=20) related to the business operations of running the faculty governance unit. These included such items as committee appointments, methods for reporting information to the Faculty Forum, officer elections, and the governance of the Forum. Additionally, five of the passed motions (14%) related to procedural issues in the Forum,

such as calling the question to vote and referring motions to committees (Action Teams). Of the remaining passed motions, eight dealt with college-wide operations, and one related to an amendment to college-wide operations. Two of the motions which were not passed dealt with college-wide operations, and the third motion which did not pass was an amendment to an earlier motion of college operations.

Issues Considered

A variety of issues were dealt with at various Action Team levels which never surfaced during Forum meetings. Four issues, however, were brought to the attention of the Forum which all eventually required a vote. These issues included: methods for determining merit pay and who should be involved and with what criteria; curriculum requirements, specifically relating to undergraduate entrance grade point averages; the College's mission statement, consistent with accreditation concerns; and the procedure for students in the College for filing a grievance.

Discussion

The faculty governance unit described here represents a unique addition to institutionally focused and directed faculty senates and councils. As institutional decision making is increasingly directed at academic unit responsibilities, such as the movement toward responsibility centered budgeting, collective

faculty measures such as the Faculty Forum may grow even more popular.

The Faculty Forum introduced several measures particularly sensitive in the current higher education debate. Issues such as merit pay, college entrance, the role and mission of academic units, and student centered procedures have all arisen to the forefront of higher education discussions in recent years. In particular, the current trend of increased litigation seems to be a motivating factor for the Forum to debate and decide on filing academic as well as non-academic grievances and appeals of these grievances, providing an area of contemplation for both procedural and substantitive due process by college administrators. Additionally, the definition of the College through role and mission statement wording reflects current trends in professional schools of education to provide a statement of preparing scholars and practitioners. Similarly, such action reflects positive self-study concerning what is currently being done and what can be done in the future.

Attendance and voting patterns provided no generalizable data to reinforce some perceptions that older, more secure faculty provide the dynamic leadership of rebellion. Conversely, the Forum case indicates that faculty at all levels are moderately involved, and few appeared to provide the inspiration or leadership necessary to rally all faculty to participate. These attendance patterns also seem to reflect a concept of "watch-dog" faculty representation, where a few highly dedicated

faculty members constantly evaluate and provide feedback on college wide and institutional decisions. This mentality provides a means of disproportionate workload, but does potentially provide a mechanism for alerting faculty to issues which may inspire or motivate them to become involved.

Similar to the decision-making and voting procedures, the agendas developed for the Forum appeared consistent with tradition, and seemed to provide an outlet for faculty debate, if necessary. The emphasis on Action Team and committee reports demonstrates the need to somehow effectively communicate important information to all faculty. Despite the ingenuity of providing reports, attendance behaviors appeared to have a somewhat nullifying effect on information dissemination.

Overall, the Forum provided the impression of a means to articulate faculty needs and desires, but perhaps most importantly, serves as a mechanism for faculty to vent frustrations and concerns related to College decision-making and policy. Considering the modest participation, the Forum does provide a valuable outlet for faculty voices to be heard. Whether or not the voices will be heeded provides a unique and rich area for further dialogue and research, one which must be examined from both the perspective of participating and non-participating faculty as well as a host of administrators.

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Table 1.

Attendance Patterns by Rank and Tenure Status

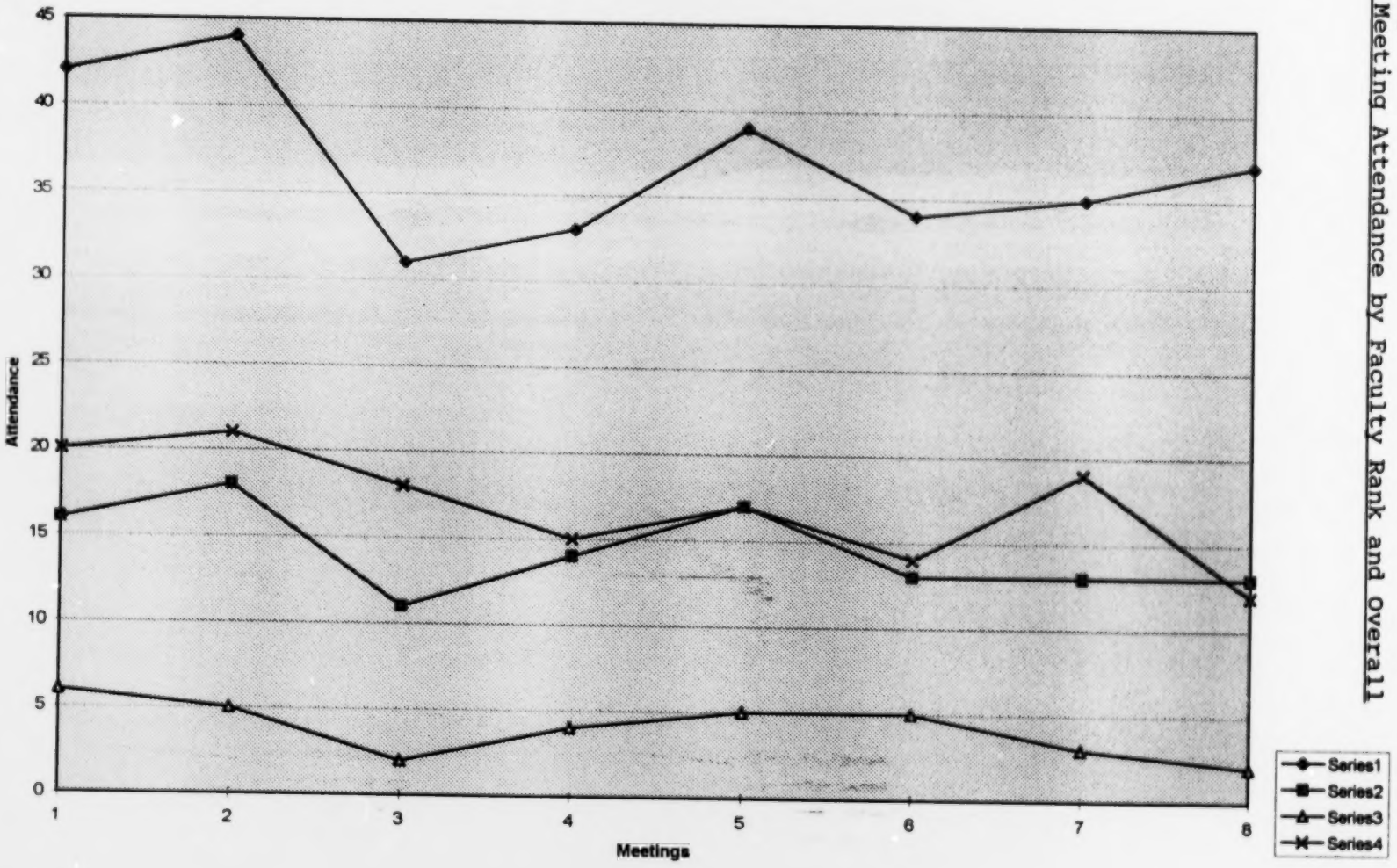
Case #	Rank	Tenure	Faculty Forum Meeting Attendance 1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	% Att
Area of Teacher Education											
1	3	N									0%
2	3	N		X	X		X		X	X	62
3	1	Y	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	87
4	1	Y	X	X	X			X			50
5	1	Y		X		X					25
6	1	Y	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	100
7	3	N	X	X		X	X	X			62
8	3	N					X	X			25
9	3	N	X	X						X	37
10	3	N	X	X				X			37
11	3	N				X			X		25
12	1	Y									0
13	1	Y	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	87
14	3	N	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	87
15	3	N	X	X	X			X		X	62
16	3	N				X	X				25
17	2	Y	X	X			X		X		50
18	1	Y					X				12
19	1	Y		X	X						25
20	2	Y		X		X			X		37
21	1	Y				X	X				25
22	1	Y	X		X		X		X		50
23	2	Y	X				X	X	X		50
24	3	N		X	X	X	X			X	62
25	3	N	X	X			X	X			50
26	1	Y	X	X	X		X	X	X		75
27	2	Y									0
28	3	N		X	X	X	X	X	X		75
29	2	Y	X	X		X	X	X		X	75
30	3	N	X	X		X	X	X	X		75
31	2	N	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		87
32	1	Y	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	100
33	1	N	X	X		X		X	X		62
34	1	Y	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	87
35	1	Y	X		X	X					37
36	1	Y	X								12

Table 1, continued

Attendance Patterns by Rank and Tenure Status

Case #	Rank	Tenure	Faculty Forum Meeting Attendance 1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	% Att
Area of Teacher Education, continued											
37	1	Y		X	X						25
38	1	Y	X								12
39	1	Y		X							12
40	3	N	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	87
41	1	Y	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	87
SUBTOTAL:			25	26	18	20	24	20	18	13	50%
Area of Professional Studies											
42	3	N	X	X	X		X		X	X	75
43	1	Y									0
44	3	N	X		X						25
45	1	Y	X						X		25
46	1	Y							X		12
47	1	Y			X		X		X		37
48	3	N	X	X		X	X		X		62
49	3	N	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	100
50	1	N	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	87
51	1	Y				X	X		X		37
52	1	Y	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	87
53	3	N		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	87
54	2	N	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	87
55	1	Y		X		X					25
56	3	N	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	87
57	3	N	X	X							25
58	1	Y		X	X						25
59	1	Y									0
60	3	N		X		X			X	X	50
61	3	N									0
62	1	Y	X				X	X		X	50
63	1	Y	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	100
64	1	Y									0
65	3	N	X	X			X			X	50
66	3	N	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	87
67	1	Y	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	100

Figure 1
Forum Meeting Attendance by Faculty Rank and overall



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Figure 2

Sample Forum Meeting Agenda

Faculty Forum Agenda
Room 122 Graves Hall, 3:30 PM

1. Call to Order
2. Reading and Approval of Minutes
3. Reports from Officers and Action Teams
   a. Officers
   b. Action Teams
      1. Finances and Facilities
      2. Curriculum
      3. External Services and Technology
      4. Faculty Affairs
      5. Governance and Operations
      6. Research
      7. Student Affairs
4. Reports from College Wide Committees
5. Reports from Faculty Senators, Graduate Council Members
6. Reports from Members of University Committees
7. New Business
8. Announcements
   (such as Memorial Reception/Fund Contributions, faculty identification cards, library changes, etc.)
9. Adjournment